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ABSTRACT

The Community Voices and Character Education (CVCE) Project presents a model for moral education that is based on four ideals: (1) the consensus among leaders worldwide on the necessary characteristics of a citizen in the new century; (2) the conception of human goodness from moral philosophy; (3) conclusions from social sciences about what helps humans thrive; and (4) a common morality approach in which the particularities of a community are integrated with research-based principles. From these four ideals, this paper draws a framework for moral education and clarifies the framework using a question-and-answer format. The questions asked are the following: (1) What does citizenship in the 21st century require of persons? (2) What is the conception of human goodness as conceived by moral philosophers? (3) How do the social sciences contribute to what is known about human flourishing? (4) What is a common morality approach? and (5) How should a moral education program be structured? Positive and negative aspects of behavior are emphasized to help students see the continuum of possibilities from the best to worst. This continuum helps them construct a self as they answer in their daily actions the question, "Who should I become?" Contains a table of ethical processes and skills for practical reasoning and functional ethics. (BT)

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Who Should I Become? Using the Positive and the Negative in Character Education.

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Who Should I Become?
Using the Positive and the Negative in Character Education

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How do you determine the content of a moral education curriculum? How do you decide what to include and what to exclude? How do you decide what is positive and what is negative? The Community Voices and Character Education (CVCE) project (Narvaez, Endicott, & Bock, 2001) presents a model for moral education that is based on four ideals: (1) the consensus among leaders worldwide on the necessary characteristics of a citizen in the new century; (2) the conception of human goodness from moral philosophy; (3) conclusions from social sciences about what helps humans thrive; (4) a common morality approach in which the particularities of a community are integrated with research-based principles. Conflicting conclusions among the sources are not viewed as negative, only as uncertain. From these four sources we draw a framework for moral education.

What does citizenship in the 21st century require of persons?

The Citizenship Education Policy Study Project (Cogan, 1997) was undertaken to identify the demands of citizenship in the early 21st century. Policy experts from nine countries participated and were asked to identify (1) global trends, (2) the necessary characteristics of citizens to enable them to cope with these trends, and (3) educational strategies with which to prepare the citizens. The experts identified global trends such as increased disparities among peoples, a deterioration of the environment, increased consumerism and government control, as well as more regional alliances, fewer systematic mistreatments of marginalized groups, and the necessary adoption of environmentally-friendly methods by business and industry. The list of educational strategies appears in the appendix. In terms of the characteristics a citizen must have for the new century, the experts agreed on these characteristics:

1. Approaches problems as member of a global society
2. Works cooperatively with others and takes responsibility for one's roles and responsibilities in society
3. Understands, accepts, and tolerates cultural differences
4. Thinks in a critical and systematic way
5. Resolves conflict in a non-violent manner
6. Adopts a way of life that protects the environment
7. Respects and defends human rights
8. Participates in public life at all levels of civic discourse
9. Makes full use of information-based technologies.

It is anticipated that if people around the world do not develop these characteristics, there will be considerable trouble around the world. All nine characteristics are incorporated into the CVCE curriculum guidelines.

What is the conception of human goodness as conceived by moral philosophers?

Every society must respond to the question 'Why be moral'? McKinnon (1999) contends that 'morality is needed to evaluate desires and to adjudicate between desires (p. 5).' Simply put, morality is something everyone must learn in order to get along in a society.

The morality of persons has been defined in ways that are primarily represented by Aristotle and Kant. Aristotle defined a good person as one who has cultivated a set of virtues for the good life. Kant believed that the good person is one who respects persons and applies the categorical imperative. More recently, philosophers such as Flanagan and Johnson have emphasized the importance of integrating human psychology into a moral philosophy.

As psychologists, we believe that the normative claims of a moral theory ought to relate the characteristics of a good person to the characteristics of a well-functioning person. We agree with McKinnon's (1999) proposal for a functionalistic naturalism:

> "Given their nature, humans have certain quintessentially human needs and human abilities. These [are] relevant in determining what counts as a good human life. The point of morality is to assist us in leading better human lives, so we need to understand how our nature constrains what counts as a good human life…The normative component of ethics will be seen to emerge from certain natural facts about human beings and from the ways in which these facts constrain what counts as a good human life." (p. 6)

The philosophical and psychological foundations of a moral education theory must directly connect to the daily experience of an individual in a practical way. What is necessary for successful functioning? A practical focus requires an operationalization of optimal functioning.

> "Just identifying what counts as a 'fact' about human nature may seem problematic unless a particular background theory about a good human life is adopted. If the set of relevant facts about human nature is taken, not to *determine* what counts as a good human life, but at best to *constrain* it, then a looseness of fit between criteria that specify which facts of human nature are relevant and preferred stories about good human lives becomes apparent. The appeal to natural facts about human beings serves to rule out some choices of kinds of lives as non-optimal. (p. 11)

The optimal life rules out choices that we know are harmful to humans (e.g., violence), as identified by psychology. Positive psychology contributes significantly to the vision of a good person. It points to the development of personal and social skills that support human relationships and human thriving. CVCE incorporates such a set of skills.

How do the social sciences contribute to what we know about human flourishing?

In recent years, psychological science has learned quite a lot about human flourishing. In fact, we know that the particular needs required for flourishing change with age and development, and vary to some degree among individuals. For example, there is increasing agreement about many of the findings of developmental psychology and neuropsychology regarding the conditions necessary for children to develop well-functioning personalities. Vital ingredients include a responsive, loving caregiver who 'converses' with the infant from the beginning, and stimulates the mind of the infant in numerous ways (e.g., reading books to the child). Such caregiver behaviors create a strong attachment and a sense of security and build the brain in ways helpful for schooling and getting along with others. We know that the brains of children who experience neglect of violence are 'built' differently from such experiences. So the negation of the factors that contribute to development have noticeable, measurable effects on children.

Positive psychology identifies particular factors that are generally related to positive outcomes and mental health. For example, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) identify courage, future mindedness, optimism, interpersonal skill, faith, work ethic, hope, honesty, and perseverance. This is a list of both personal and social skills that enhance relationships, required because humans are highly dependent on other humans. Our model includes skills necessary for social and psychological flourishing.

We also have learned a great deal about what makes humans not get along with one another. For example, human brains are designed to respond to the world in particular limited ways that functioned well in a simpler society. Researchers are finding that what works for survival in a circumscribed environment (e.g., quickly interpreting sensory input based on previous experience and jumping to conclusions), in a more complex world such as ours leads

to inaccurate and often biased perceptions. These limitations have implications for how we think about morality. Humans are by nature biased observers and judges. They are constrained by an information processing system that generalizes, prefers the familiar, and recoils from difference. Any moral education program must make evident these biases and nurture the means to control them. CVCE does so.

What is a common morality approach?

In modernity, religious traditions have melted in the heat (and sometimes light) of modern rationality and science. No longer does the authority of any tradition command respect per se. Instead, reason and perspective tear particularity into unrecognizable forms of inclusion. Yet the answer to 'why be good?' requires an immutable soul-grabbing command. If we live in an era parched for the sacrosanct, why be good? Whence the sacred command?

Some scholars have proposed replacements for faith's clear demands for goodness. Hunter (1994, 2000), a sociologist, suggests that we can (only) find the answer in the particularities that we bring to a civic dialogue:

> "Character outside of a lived community, the entanglements of complex social relationships, and their shared story, is impossible." (2000, p. 227)
> "...instead of forcing commonality in our moral discourse at the expense of
> particularity, one *discovers* commonality *through* particularity. (ibid., p. 230)

In defining the moral life, a vision or principles for optimal functioning (moral skills) are presented to a community. In response, the particular community provides the moral convictions and framework for specifying the moral skills. Thus, optimal functioning is grounded in the specific context of the individual and his or her community. That is, the community must dialogue about the specific forms or manifestations of optimal human functioning. For example, how does one show respect? Each community will have a variant response. Although the principle of respect may be the same across communities, the specific implementations and manifestations will differ.

How should a moral education program be structured?

The Community Voices and Character Education (CVCE) project presents a model for character education that contrasts with most models. It has these characteristics:

1. It emphasizes the development of ethical skills rather than the learning of dispositional traits.
2. It incorporates constructivist views of teaching and learning using structured experience in helping novices move toward expertise.
3. It empowers the student with the grave responsibility of constructing a self.
4. It embeds character education across the curriculum rather than being an add-on program.
5. It specifies the importance of adjusting the framework to community contexts.

Several of these characteristics will be described and then discussed in terms of how they approach the positive and negative.

(1) It emphasizes the development of ethical skills rather than the learning of dispositional traits.

Whereas most character education programs tacitly endorse a trait understanding of character, a view not actually held by contemporary personality theorists, the present model bases its understanding of character on well-attested literatures in cognitive science. Character development is, according to this view, not a matter of developing traits of character, bur rather a matter of developing a set of component skills to levels of expertise. Hence, individuals who have good moral character are more expert in the exercise of certain foundational skills, rather than being in

possession of certain personality traits. Whereas most character education programs rely upon a "transmission model " of teaching and learning---a model that assumes that teaching is a matter of adults handing off knowledge to passive "learners"—the present model is based upon constructivist principles that guide "best practice" instruction. This view assumes that individuals are active constructors of meaning. It assumes that individuals build conceptual frameworks, both declarative and procedural, in the process of making sense of one's experience. Moreover, whereas most character education programs rest on thin empirical evidence, the this model is attested by a voluminous literature and rests on important research traditions in moral development research. Whereas most programs are founded upon questionable human psychology, this model stands on firm psychological research and theory, incorporating a dynamic view of ethical behavior, skills, and processes.

Character development is, according to this view, not a matter of developing traits of character, but rather developing a set of inter and intrapersonal skills that build proficiency towards expertise. Instead of espousing a trait approach, like Robert Sternberg (1998) and others we prefer to think of the characteristics of an ethical person as an interplay of skills.

Using a concrete view of ethical behavioral processes (ethical sensitivity, judgment, motivation, and action), each process is parsed into skill categories which are teachable, assessable, and can be taught in regular subjects across the curriculum. Although most CVCE skills are labeled in terms of positive behaviors, a person of character must contend with the circumstances that pull him or her in contrary directions, both positive and negative.

(2) It incorporates constructivist views of teaching and learning using structured experience in helping novices move toward expertise.

Traditional character educators view moral themes (and moral virtues) like biological gene packets that are passed from one generation to the next. Consequently, they seem to be stuck in a 19th century understanding of human development and learning. They appear ignorant of current knowledge about human learning that emphasizes such things as the construction of meaning and building representations.

The Community Voices and Character Education (CVCE) project framework uses novice-to-expert skill building rather than the more traditional 'character trait' approach to character education. Expertise is a dominant focus among researchers in human learning (e.g., Ericsson & Smith, 1991), in particular the view of a learner as a novice gaining expertise (e.g., Sternberg, 1999). According to this view, human learning proceeds along a continuum between novice status and expert status. Experts are different from novices. We've learned that experts are different from novices in several important ways. Unlike novices, experts know what knowledge to access, which procedures to apply, how to apply them and when. According to Sternberg (1998), experts have (a) large, rich, organized networks of concepts (schemas) containing a great deal of declarative knowledge about the domain; (b) well-organized, higher interconnected units of knowledge in the domain.

The distinction between novice and expert is relevant in the moral domain as well (e.g., Narvaez, 1999). Applying the novice-to-expert orientation to our model, in every process and skill area, experts perform in a superior manner. Experts in *Ethical Sensitivity* are able to more quickly and accurately 'read' a situation and determine what role they might play. These experts are also better at generating usable solutions because of their greater understanding of the consequences of possible actions. Experts in *Ethical Judgment* are more skilled in solving complex problems, seeing the crux of a problem quickly and bringing with them many schemas for reasoning about what to do. Their information processing tools are more complex but also more efficient. Experts in *Ethical Motivation* are skilled at maintaining their focus on prioritizing the ethical ideal. Their motivation is directed by an organized structure of moral self-identity. Experts in *Ethical Action* are able to keep themselves focused and take the necessary steps to get the ethical job done. They

demonstrate superior performance when completing an ethical action.

Addressing the positive and negative ends of the continuum of excellence is a necessary element in teaching novices to be experts. In other words, when one learns about being ethically sensitive, one must see examples of both insensitivity and sensitivity. Students must see the harm of insensitivity and the benefits of sensitivity.

(3) It empowers the student with the grave responsibility of constructing a self.

A model for character education cannot be described without including the most important contextual variable: the students. Students will have different needs and interests, levels of development and areas of skill. Yet they have in common what we all have in common. Each of us ultimately makes the decisions about who and what we will become. Our decisions shape our characters and our futures. The 'constructing expertise' model helps students develop the skills for good choices but puts the onus on their shoulders for making the final decisions about their behavior.

In CVCE, the central questions for the students are "Who should I be" and "What do I want to become?" In the words of Christine McKinnon, individuals must 'do the work necessary for constructing a character' (Character, Virtue Theories, and the Vices, 1999, p. 42). Christine McKinnon states that humans are "the kinds of beings who invest their lives with meaning by creating a self which identifies them as the kind of person they are and which provides a unifying link to the various facets of their lives" (p. 42). McKinnon also states that "the person of integrity has a self-reflexive concern with the compatibility and consistency of her many different traits and interests." (p. 38)

How do we view the challenge of self construction? As the main task of a human being. So how do you work on the good self? Look at the chart for how we have conceptualized it.

The CVCE curriculum guidelines for teachers present skills that are integral to practical reasoning. (The four processes and their skills are listed in Table 1.) These skills include aspects of personal development-- necessary for a good life, and aspects of social development--necessary for acting ethically.

The CVCE skills are listed in their positive sense, yet in order to understand and nurture them in the classroom, their negation or opposites must be discussed. That is, in order to learn the skills, teachers and students need to discuss the consequences and effects of not having the skills. For example, Christine McKinnon (Character, Virtue Theories, and the Vices, 1999) describes wickedness in the following way:

> "What has gone wrong is that insufficient or unsuccessful attention has been paid to the task of constructing a self, of developing a character, of cultivating the right kinds of desires and interests, and of learning to take pleasure in the pursuit.....The conceptual point remains that the functionally best kind of human life involves much critical evaluation and self-reflexive awareness and practice in the making of a self. Human lives deficient in these respects will be less than good human lives" (p. 43).

The integration of skills across processes and within unique situations is a lifelong task. Our program seeks to get children off on the right foot to taking interest in their characters, and to take on the task, in McKinnon's words, of "constructing a self...of cultivating the right kinds of desires and interests, of learning to take pleasure in the pursuit". The self envisioned by the CVCE project is a self prepared to participate in a multicultural pluralistic democracy.

(4) It embeds character education across the curriculum rather than being an add-on program.

When the research framework is applied in a particular context, the 'constructing expertise' model is in action. Although contexts of implementation will always vary, one of the absolutes of implementation is the embedding of character education into regular instruction. This should happen in every subject area. We believe that character education should not stand alone but be incorporated into the entire spectrum of education for students. Ethics pervades our everyday lives, and it should be the same for students in school. Regardless of the curriculum, teachers can always raise issues of ethics (sensitivity, judgment, motivation, action) in lessons.

(7) It specifies the importance of adjusting the framework to community contexts.

In this approach we encourage a type of 'common morality' in deciding on the specific forms of functioning to be addressed. That is, we researchers present a set of guidelines for optimal functioning that we have culled from research and scholarship (top-down educational framework). This set of guidelines includes fundamental assumptions about the purpose of schooling (to nurture effective global citizens) and a set of skills for individuals to learn.

The guidelines are presented to each community and each community discusses them in terms of specific community needs and diversity (bottom-up educational framework). As a critical 'bottom up' feature, the skill categories are to be embedded in the cultural context where they are taught. To some degree, each community has its own understanding of the skills. For example, 'respecting others' can be expressed in various ways, as we know from cultures around the world. Likewise, identifying ethical problems and possible actions may vary among communities. The project design encourages that the actual day-to-day practice of the skills be determined on site, by the community. The teacher is encouraged to work with the community on how to teach the skills and what to emphasize. The teacher tailors the classroom work to the local understanding of the skill. Further, the student is encouraged to gather information about the skill from the community (parents, elders) and bring back that information to the classroom. There will be various interpretations of the skills because of diversity in culture, religion, socio-economic status, regional background, and so on. When this diversity is brought into the classroom by the students themselves, it provides an appropriate backdrop for dialogue about the implementation of ethical skills and for teaching respect for differences. It can also be an important demonstration of how groups may have different practices while having the same underlying value. This top-down and bottom-up combination allows each community to have its mark on the set of guidelines but within certain parameters, of optimal functioning within a pluralistic democracy and a global community.

Summary

The Community Voices and Character Education approach presents a framework for conceptualizing ethical education, incorporating four strands: global citizenship, psychological knowledge, moral philosophy, and common morality. It applies a process model of ethical behavior, incorporating current understandings of human learning and development. Although we stress a research base, we also emphasize the expression of context-specific, community values. Throughout the strands, both positive and negative aspects are emphasized (e.g., what are the consequences of poor global citizenship?) In each case, the student must see the continuum of possibilities from best to worst (e.g., where the pitfalls of human bias are, what are the dangers of wickedness). This will help them in constructing a self as they answer in their actions day by day, 'Who should I become?"

Table 1.
Ethical Processes and Skills for Practical Reasoning and Functional Ethics

PROCESS CATEGORY	*Possible Negative/ Opposite*
ETHICAL SENSITIVITY	
ES-1: Reading and Expressing Emotion	Violence
ES-2: Caring by Connecting to Others	Apathy, Disdain
ES-3: Working with group and interpersonal differences	Hate
ES-4: Taking the Perspectives of Others	Narcissism, Delusions
ES-5: Controlling Social Bias	Genocide
ES-6: Identifying Options and Interpretations	Rigidity
ES-7: Identifying the Consequences of Actions and Options	Recklessness
ETHICAL JUDGMENT	
EJ-1: Developing General Reasoning Skills	Manipulable
EJ-2: Developing Ethical Reasoning Skills	Self-centered
EJ-3: Understanding Ethical Problems	Disregard
EJ-4: Using Codes and Identifying Judgment Criteria	Resentment
EJ-5: Reflecting on the Process and Outcome	No growth
EJ-6: Planning to Implement Decisions	No follow through
EJ-7: Developing Optimism	Nihilism
ETHICAL MOTIVATION	
EM-1: Respecting Others	Contempt
EM-2: Developing Conscience	Sociopathy
EM-3: Acting Responsibly	Careless
EM-4: Helping Others	Miserly
EM-5: Making Peace and Cooperating	Violence
EM-6: Valuing Traditions and Institutions	Anarchy
EM-7: Developing Ethical Identity And Integrity	
ETHICAL ACTION	
EC-1: Communicating Well	Violence
EC-2: Resolving Conflicts and Problems	Violence
EC-3: Identifying Needs and Acting Assertively	Violence rules
EC-4: Taking Initiative as a Leader	Extremes rule
EC-5: Developing Courage	Cowardice
EC-6: Developing Perseverance	Disdain
EC-7: Working Hard	Unaccomplished

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